

- (4) Earthy olive brown cobra, length 5 feet.

*Note* : Probably *Naja nigricollis*.

- (5) Green 'mamba'—lives in trees to a great extent—length 5 feet.

*Note* : Probably a green viper of genus *Causus*.

The poisonous snakes of this country are not very well known, and it is hoped that members of the Society will devote some attention to the collection of specimens; for the purpose of identification it is not necessary to send in the whole body of a snake, but the head and upper part of the neck should be sent in, in spirit; but the length should be measured and a careful description of the body markings noted immediately after death; the body should be skinned and the dried skin forwarded, or the skin can be left attached to the hood and placed in spirit with the head.

It is very important that all residents should be able readily to identify all the poisonous reptiles of the country.

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## EUROPEAN MIGRANTS IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA

By A. B. PERCIVAL.

Few subjects have interested naturalists more than the migration of birds, and it is only comparatively recently that it was accepted that birds migrated for any great distance. Even such a good naturalist as White of Selborne had doubts about the Swallows, and quoted cases of hibernating Swallows having been found in various places, though he admits that he never saw any himself.

One can quite understand doubts being held as to the possibility of such weak-winged birds as the Willow-Warbler and Sedge-Warbler being able to cross even the English Channel, but the man who had told White that they actually travelled for 4000 miles to their winter resort would have been laughed at. Yet such is the case. One can easily understand such strong-winged birds as Swallows and Swifts travelling any distance, but that the small warblers that flit from tree to tree

and hardly seem able to go more than a few yards at a time should travel all the way from Europe to the Cape is really wonderful.

At present very little is known of the time, or the route they take, and it is in hopes of interesting some of the naturalists in British East Africa that I am writing. British East Africa is really half way between the winter and summer haunts of the European migrants, and a series of dates when birds pass through East Africa on their southern journey, and again on their return trip would be of the greatest interest. In Europe the most accurate records of arrivals and departures are kept, and in South Africa similar records are being made. The trouble here will, I am afraid, be the same as in South Africa, namely, the fact that most of the migrants are rather insignificant birds and by no means well known.

There are a few, however, that everyone knows. For instance, the big White Stork that is often seen in thousands near grass fires—the English Swallow—Red-backed Shrike. And the English Land-rail or Corncrake, another bird that hardly seems able to fly a hundred yards in England.

The wading birds of Europe are very strongly represented on our coast during the winter months, and it seems strange to hear the wild call of the Curlew, the tittering whistle of the Whimbrel, and the various familiar calls of the Ring-Dotterel, Sanderling, Turnstone, Little Stint and other waders that one knows on the British coast.

Hearing these old calls takes me back to a rocky bit of coast line in the north, where I spent many an hour crouched in a stone blind waiting for the tide to rise and put the wading birds off the flats, and set them fighting along the edge of the incoming tide within reach of my gun.

It is not only on the coast that waders are to be seen, but about October and March every little stream and pool has some wader or other. The Common, the Wood and the Green Sandpipers, Little Stints, Ruffs, Greenshanks and others are everywhere. Many of these spend the whole winter with us, but by far the greater number pass south, returning again three or four months later, and are apparently very regular as to their times of passing. The Great or Solitary Snipe, for instance,

is almost always found between May 1 and 17, and it is seldom that even a single bird is seen after this in places where a bag of ten or twelve couple could have been made only a day or two before.

The earliest of the migrants begin to arrive about the end of August, and the bird I have usually seen first is the Asiatic Dotterel, a visitor from Siberia. They arrive in small lots of three or four, but before they leave congregate into flocks of thousands. I may add here that they are most excellent eating, being very fat and quite equal to snipe though, of course, not so large.

Other waders seem to follow them, but it is noticeable that one sees far less of the migrants on their southern journey than on their return. Partly, I have no doubt, owing to their being more scattered, and also in very poor plumage. On their return journey they are in almost full breeding plumage, and are also travelling in company to a large extent.

There is, however, another possible reason why the feathered travellers are not seen so much on their southward migration, that is, they may travel by another route, and to discover this would be most interesting. There is no doubt whatever that the route followed is not always the same, but is liable to change owing to the season and rains.

The Great Snipe of which I have already spoken is one year numerous in a certain district in May, while another year not a bird will be seen.

In addition to the migration of the European birds there is the migration of purely African birds, but of this we know very little indeed. Various species breed here that one does not see at any other time. And various Cuckoos only appear at certain seasons of the year.

The Emerald, Golden and Klaas's Cuckoo all appear about November, and stay till May, apparently. The fact is worth noticing that they appear in South Africa in November, so that this cannot be their haunt.

The Golden and Klaas's Cuckoo lay eggs in April and May, I know—and I should not be at all surprised if they also left their eggs in the nests of birds that breed in the small rains.

Mr. W. L. Selater in the lucid paper he read before the

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British Association in 1905 called ' Migration of Birds in South Africa ' gives the following classes of migrants :

- (1) Northern migrants, i.e. birds from the Northern Hemisphere which breed in Europe or Asia.

## I.—NORTHERN MIGRANTS

<i>Oriolus galbula</i>	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	<i>Sylvia simplex</i>
<i>Motacilla capensis</i>	„ <i>cinerea</i>
„ <i>flava</i>	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
„ <i>borealis</i>	<i>Hypolais icterina</i>
„ <i>melanocephala</i>	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
<i>Lanius minor</i>	„ <i>palustris</i>
<i>Acrocephalus schcenobæus</i>	<i>Crex pratensis</i>
<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	<i>Ortygometra porzana</i>
<i>Cisticola cursitans</i>	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
<i>Erithacus philomela</i>	„ <i>melanoptera</i>
<i>Saxicola cenanthe</i>	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
<i>Muscicapa grisola</i>	<i>Squatarola helvetica</i>
<i>Chelidon urbica</i>	<i>Ægialitis geoffroyi</i>
<i>Cotile riparia</i>	„ <i>asiatica</i>
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	„ <i>hiaticola</i>
<i>Cypselus apus</i>	„ <i>alexandrina</i>
<i>Caprimulgus europæus</i>	<i>Totanus calidris</i>
<i>Coracias garrula</i>	„ <i>glottis</i>
<i>Merops apiaster</i>	„ <i>stagnatilis</i>
„ <i>persicus</i>	„ <i>glareola</i>
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	„ <i>ochropus</i>
<i>Coccytes glandarius</i>	„ <i>cinereus</i>
<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	„ <i>hypoleucus</i>
<i>Tinnunculus vespertinus</i>	<i>Pavoncella pugnax</i>
„ <i>amurensis</i>	<i>Tringa canutus</i>
„ <i>naumanni</i>	„ <i>bairdi</i>
<i>Buteo desertorum</i>	„ <i>minuta</i>
<i>Milvus ægyptius</i>	„ <i>subarquata</i>
„ <i>korschun</i>	<i>Calidris arenaria</i>
<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	<i>Gallinago media</i>
<i>Circus cineraceus</i>	<i>Hydrochelidon hybrida</i>
„ <i>macrurus</i>	„ <i>leucoptera</i>

<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	<i>Sterna cantiaea</i>
<i>Ciconia alba</i>	„ <i>macrura</i>
„ <i>nigra</i>	„ <i>minuta</i>
<i>Ardetta minuta</i>	<i>Stercorarius crepidatus</i>
<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	„ <i>pomatorhinus</i>

- (2) African migrants, i.e. birds which spend the southern summer months (October to March) in South Africa, breed there, and move off probably into tropical Africa during the South African winter. The Stripe-breasted Swallow and Red-chested Cuckoo are quoted as examples.

## II.—SOUTH AFRICAN MIGRANTS

<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>	<i>Coccyzus jacobinus</i>
„ <i>euclata</i>	„ <i>hypopinnarius</i>
„ <i>semirufa</i>	„ <i>serratus</i>
<i>Cypselus africanus</i>	<i>Falco minor</i>
<i>Eurystomus afer</i>	<i>Abdimia abdimii</i>
<i>Haleyon swainsoni</i>	<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>
<i>Lynx ruficollis</i>	<i>Rhinoptilus chalcopterus</i>
<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	<i>Cuculus clamosus</i>
„ <i>solitarius</i>	<i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i>
<i>Chrysococcyx klaasi</i>	<i>Lobivanellus lateralis</i>
„ <i>smaragdineus</i>	

- (8) Wandering birds which move from place to place, their movements probably being connected with their food supply, and also some local birds which go off to certain remote places to breed. In East Africa the Green and other Pigeons move about a great deal for food and the Kites go away to build and breed.
- (4) Resident-birds which remain in the same place all the year round and hardly move away at all.

By the time this Journal comes out the migrants will be arriving, and if members of the Society will make a note of when they see any European bird for the first time in autumn and the last time in spring, and send their observations, we shall soon get an idea of the dates when the migrants arrive and depart.

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Notes as to prevailing wind and weather generally given with the dates would make observations of greater value.

I would advise that particular attention be paid to the  
 White Stork or European Swallow.  
 Large Locust-bird. Lesser Kestrel  
 European Bee-eater. Asiatic Dotterel and Great Snipe.

These are all birds that can be recognised by most.

The following list of European migrants that I have actually obtained in East Africa may be of some use as a guide but it is by no means complete :—

Lesser Kestrel	Common Cuckoo
Hobby	Great Spotted Cuckoo
European Bee-eater	Swallow
Golden Oriole	Sedge-Warbler
Rock-Thrush	Willow „
Red-backed Shrike	White Stork
Lesser Grey Shrike	Curlew
Spotted Fly-catcher	Whimbrel
Isabelline Wheatear	Grey Plover
Common „	Ruff
Tree Pipit	Great Snipe
Red-breasted Pipit	Curlew Sandpiper
Ray's Yellow Wagtail	Common „
Blue-headed „	Wood „
Hoopoe	Green „
Turnstone	Ring Dotterel
Sanderling	Little Stint
Greenshank	Landrail
Asiatic Dotterel	